



Press Release

For immediate release:
December 20, 2007

Contact:
Lee Pitts (Alexander) (202) 224-8816
Andrew Whalen (Shuler) (202) 225- 6501

Alexander, Shuler Announce Down Payment on Settlement to End North Shore Road Project ***\$6 Million Set Aside for Swain County in Omnibus Appropriations Bill***

Washington, D.C. –U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and U.S. Representative Heath Shuler (D-NC) today announced that they have secured \$6 million in the Fiscal Year 2008 Omnibus appropriations bill to begin a settlement between Swain County and the federal government for the North Shore Road – also known as the “Road to Nowhere” – through the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. The \$6 million will be appropriated to the National Park Service to hold for use in the eventual settlement with Swain County.

The National Park Service recommended a monetary settlement to Swain County as the preferred alternative to the construction of the North Shore Road in their Final Environmental Impact Study (FEIS) in October.

“For sixty-four years the issue of the North Shore Road has divided communities and families. This reserved funding, along with the Park Service’s final EIS, shows that we have finally reached the end of this long journey,” said Rep. Shuler. “A full settlement is a commonsense solution that will protect the integrity of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park, while also providing Swain County the resources it needs to invest in job creation and school improvement.”

“It’s about time that we put a stop to the Road to Nowhere,” said Alexander. “For decades we’ve been working for the right solution for the taxpayers of America, the people of Swain County, and those who love the Great Smoky Mountains. I’m glad this day has finally come.”

The federal government made a commitment to Swain County in 1943 – when it flooded a highway in connection with the creation of the Fontana Dam – to build a new road through what had become the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The U.S. Supreme Court, however, held in 1946 that there is no legal obligation to satisfy that commitment by building another road.

The Swain County Board of Commissioners has repeatedly voted to support the monetary settlement instead of building the North Shore Road. That resolution remains in effect today as the position of the people of Swain County expressed through their elected officials.

###